

# Historical Driving Tour: Ukrainian Churches in East Central Alberta








In 1988, Ukrainians commemorate the millennium of Christianity in Ukraine. The Inventory of Potential Historic Sites, Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism, is pleased to participate in this celebration through the preparation of a driving tour of historic Ukrainian churches in east-central Alberta. These churches are a living testimony to a people's dedication to longstanding traditions and remain among the most significant architectural features in the province.

The booklet has been published by the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, in association with Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism.

Diana Thomas Kordan  
Historic Sites Service





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# **Historical Driving Tour: Ukrainian Churches in East Central Alberta**



## INTRODUCTION



*St. Mary Russo-Orthodox Church at Shandro, ca. 1920 (Photo courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta)*

The vast majority of Ukrainians who immigrated to Canada settled in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. This influx came in three distinct waves between 1891 and 1954: pre-World War I, inter-war, and post-World War II, with the first wave being the largest. Most of the settlers were from the regions of Galicia and Bukovyna in Western Ukraine and they brought with them a material culture that clearly reflected the peasant lifestyle of those regions.

The first Ukrainian settlers in Canada came to the Star-Edna district of Alberta, north of Lamont. From that point, they spread east and west along the banks of the North Saskatchewan River, encompassing an area now referred to as the east central bloc settlement. In this region, over 100 Ukrainian churches were constructed before World War II, churches which illustrate the importance of a material culture and its transformation in a Canadian context.


The churches of the east central bloc settlement area represent the three major religious denominations to which Ukrainians profess adherence: the Russo-Orthodox, the Ukrainian Catholic, and the Ukrainian Orthodox. However, with few exceptions, there is little difference in the design of the structures housing each of these faiths. In fact,



parishes that changed denominations were not required to alter the outward appearance of the churches or their contents in any significant way.

Churches were among the first socially-oriented structures built by the country's Ukrainian pioneers and remain important social focal points among Ukrainian Canadians to this day. Settlers felt the church to be important in their daily lives, a fact illustrated in several ways. First, many Ukrainian communities built churches before it was certain that a priest could be found to serve their parish. Second, in the absence of clergy during the early years following their immigration, many Ukrainians readily changed denominations to acquire a priest sooner. Though there were other reasons for converting, the immediate availability of someone who could provide proper, familiar Christian ministration on a regular basis was certainly among the most significant. The first Ukrainians to settle here did whatever they could to maintain continuity with the religious rituals and traditions to which they had been accustomed in their homeland. As closely as possible, they reproduced the style of churches already familiar to them from Ukraine, producing a variety of Ukrainian Canadian church types, from small, log-built structures to larger, frame-built churches clad in a clapboard or stucco finish.

The increasing sophistication of Ukrainian church architecture, construction methods, and craftsmanship mirrored the steady growth and improving material conditions of the Ukrainian community. The earliest structures were simple in scale and design, as the financial means to build more elaborate churches were not yet available and the lack of professional church architects or painters made it difficult to erect complex church designs. As these conditions changed and the Ukrainian Canadian population grew, churches of a grander scale began to appear. By the late 1930s, Ukrainian churches had acquired a level of architectural sophistication that has made them among the most unique and



interesting features of the prairie landscape.

All twenty-five churches on this tour were built prior to 1948, and several were constructed before 1910. The vast majority are the parish's second or even third church. Most of the early ecclesiastical structures built by Ukrainians have been demolished to make way for new (usually larger) churches, destroyed by fire, or simply left to the mercy of the elements.


Thus, the selection of churches in the tour highlights a period of Ukrainian Canadian material culture as it existed well after the pioneers had initially established themselves and, indeed, often into the second and even third generations of Canadians.

Those embarking on this driving tour should be aware that some of the route includes travel on gravel roads. In rural Alberta, east-west roads occur at two-mile intervals while north-south roads occur at one-mile intervals. Most of the churches are locked and located on private property and should therefore be viewed only from the road. If, however, you are fortunate enough to encounter the church's caretaker on site, kindly ask permission to enter. What you find will be breathtaking.

Now, in the 1980s, the whole east central bloc settlement area is in decline, due largely to the changing role of the railroad in the region over the last thirty years. The rural churches are maintained by a few of the devoted older parishioners who are either retired or who still make their living from the land. Most of the early pioneers have died, while their grandchildren and great-grandchildren have migrated to urban centres. Thus, it is not unusual for a rural church to be attended and kept up by no more than twelve or thirteen of the faithful, making the long-term future of these parishes uncertain.

The Ukrainian churches that still remain in the settlement area, be they Ukrainian Catholic, Ukrainian Orthodox, or Russo-Orthodox, provide more than spiritual comfort and guidance. They offer everyone a special





glimpse into Alberta's past and an opportunity to experience one of the province's most magnificent hidden treasures.

Finally, you will note that the spelling of Ukrainian names and places throughout the tour is derived from popular usage.



# St. Josaphat Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral

EDMONTON 10825 97 Street



*St. Josaphat Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral*

The first St. Josaphat Ukrainian Catholic Church was built on this site in 1904 by the Basilians and dedicated that year on the 27th of November, the Feast of St. Josaphat. It was a small, wood-frame building with a cruciform plan, a single entrance, and a single large dome. By 1913, St. Josaphat's was too small, and renovations were carried out which doubled the size of the church. Despite these efforts, the church was again too small by 1938, and it was decided that an entirely new building was needed.

Construction on the new St. Josaphat church was begun in 1939 according to plans by Reverend Phillip Ruh. Ironically, Reverend Ruh was neither of Ukrainian origin nor a Basilian. Rather, he was a Belgian Oblate who had transferred to the Byzantine rite. Completed in 1944, the church was designated a cathedral in 1948 when Edmonton was made the seat of a newly-formed Ukrainian Catholic Exarchate. Although St. Josaphat's cost about \$250,000 to build, only \$150,000 was actually spent, the rest being contributed in the form of volunteer time and labour.

St. Josaphat's is the only example in Alberta of Reverend Ruh's "Prairie Cathedrals." Built following a cruciform plan, the Cathedral has seven cupolas and an



entrance portico supported by eight modified Tuscan columns. The proportions of the church do not emphasize the vertical to the extent originally envisioned by Ruh because the large interior space created would have been excessively costly to heat and because the cupolas crowning the church would have interfered with the flight-path of planes landing at the Municipal Airport. Extensive murals decorate the barrel vault and dome inside the church. Professor J. Bucmaniuk undertook the decoration of the church between 1950 and 1955. He included a scene of the Last Judgment, which depicts Stalin and Hitler among the damned and he and his mother among those ascending to heaven.

The Baroque effect achieved by the rich decoration of the interior, which was enhanced in 1968 by the addition of an elaborate iconostasis, and the exterior scheme of the architectural design undoubtedly created the effect desired by Reverend Ruh. St. Josaphat's Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral was one of Ruh's last large-scale churches. It remains essentially unchanged and was declared a Provincial Historic Resource in 1983.



## St. John the Baptist Ukrainian Catholic Church

LAMONT 50 Avenue and 48 Street

2



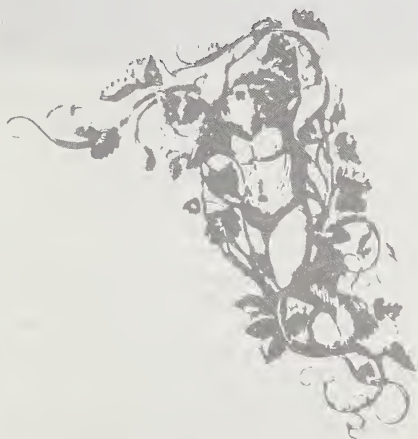
*St. John the Baptist Ukrainian Catholic Church*

Like the Ukrainian churches of most east-central Alberta towns and villages, the domes of St. John Church dominate the Lamont skyline. Built in 1947, the structure represents one of the last attempts in the settlement area to build a cruciform (i.e., five-part cross-shaped), as opposed to the more architecturally sophisticated, nine-part church. Although the parish was founded in 1937, this is the second church on the site. The first was a converted one-room schoolhouse that was purchased from the Deep Creek School District for \$150 in 1941 and moved to the site.



One of the more interesting features of the current structure is the twin-tower configuration on the facade, indicating a French Canadian architectural influence. Typical for a Ukrainian Canadian church, the windows are round-headed and it is capped by onion domes. The cupolas over the twin towers and on top of the main dome have false windows on each side of their octagonal bases, which were painted in the same pattern as the structure's real windows. This is a design feature used regularly on the Ukrainian churches in the area that were being either built or renovated in the 1940s and 1950s.

A modern steel belltower stands immediately south of the church.



## St. Mary Ukrainian Catholic Church

3

CHIPMAN 50 Street, south of 48 Avenue



*St. Mary Ukrainian Catholic Church*

St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church was built in 1916 by the well-known craftsman Jarema Janishewski. The building has undergone a number of facelifts throughout its existence, including the addition of an iconostasis in 1922 (wood repainted in 1967) and the covering of the original wooden siding with stucco (note that the bases of the domes were not stuccoed). The most significant addition to the decorative scheme was the painting of the interior in 1928 by the famous church artist Peter Lipinski. Highlights of his work include the imitation cut stone on the walls, decorative borders, the angels on the ceiling of the main dome, and the oil paintings with integrated painted frames on canvas glued directly to the walls.





### *View of Iconostasis*

St. Mary's was founded as a Ukrainian Catholic parish in 1900–1 (Vasyl Eleniak, one of the first two Ukrainians to settle in Canada, was one of the founding members) and its first church was built about two miles east of Chipman seven years later. In 1915, a split developed in the congregation, with several members expressing a wish to convert to the Russo-Orthodox faith. Based on a legal precedent that had been set ten years earlier, the converts were allowed to continue holding their services in the original church. Those who wished to remain Ukrainian Catholic, on the other hand, built the present St. Mary's Church in the townsite. A cemetery, wooden belltower, and the Chipman Ukrainian National Hall all stand adjacent to St. Mary's Church.

**Assumption of the Blessed Virgin  
Mary Ukrainian Catholic Church**  
HILLIARD townsite, south end of Main Street

4



*Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Ukrainian  
Catholic Church*

Symptomatic of economic decline and a dwindling population base in the settlement area, this interesting structure lies abandoned on the hamlet's southwest corner. Built in 1938 by local builder Roman Verest, this church is essentially similar to the Lamont and Chipman churches already visited, but there are some key differences as well. The fan-shaped steps, for instance, are not found on any other church in the region. There is also a decorated parapet over the storm porch, which includes a statue of the Virgin Mary. This, too, is a rare feature and indicates the influence of Roman Catholicism.

The parish was incorporated in 1937, with Reverend Marko Romanovych as the first parish priest.

There is an old log belltower in the bushes behind the church.





## **Basilian Monastery**

**MUNDARE** Sawchuk Street, north of 50 Street



*Basilian Monastery*

The first Ukrainian Catholic priests of the Order of St. Basil the Great arrived in the settlement area in 1902 to undertake missionary activity. They began to hold services in private homes in the western and southern portions of the region, where Ukrainian Catholic immigrants predominated. By 1914, thirty-three Ukrainian Catholic churches had been built in addition to two day schools and a convent in Mundare.

Constructed in 1922, this is the oldest Basilian monastery in Canada. It is actually the successor to the Basilian mission station that was established three miles east of Mundare soon after the first members of the Order had arrived. It was designed by Reverend Phillip Ruh, one of the best-known Ukrainian Canadian church architects of his time. It is a two-storey brick structure that includes quarters for members of the Order, a small chapel, a study, and other facilities. The exterior is sombre and unassuming, with no outward features, except for two statues, one of which is a likeness of St. Basil the Great, to indicate that it is a religious edifice of any sort. It is located on grounds situated across from both Sts. Peter and Paul Ukrainian Catholic Church and the first Basilian chapel in the area, which was recently relocated to the townsite in order to be converted into a museum. East of Sts. Peter and Paul Church is the Mundare Ukrainian Museum, which is



well worth visiting. Immediately north of the monastery stands the grotto known as the "Golgotha of Mundare."





## Grotto: "Golgotha of Mundare"

MUNDARE Sawchuk Street, north of 50 Street



*Grotto, "Golgotha of Mundare"*

This fascinating structure is designed so that the faithful can visit in order to pray and meditate privately. Although it has a main outdoor altar that is occasionally used to celebrate Mass, the Grotto is essentially a combination of chaplets, prayer stations, and catacombs designed to convey and emphasize the element of mysticism in the Ukrainian Catholic religion. The idea to build the Grotto was conceived by Reverend P. Bodnar.

Construction began in 1932, with the Basilians actively taking part in the project. It took approximately a decade to complete.

Constructed from a combination of fieldstone, masonry, and concrete, the Grotto is crowned by an 8.5 metre steel cross that lights up the night sky. Much of the Grotto's beauty stems from the carefully-tended vines and shrubs that drape and surround it.

"Golgotha of Mundare" is situated in a large, picturesque yard immediately north of the Basilian monastery. An inscription on the front reads, "Holy Martyr Josaphat, pray for our people."



## St. Jacob Russo-Orthodox Church

7

BEAVER LAKE 2½ miles north, 1 mile west, ¼ mile north of Mundare (SE 1-54-17-W4)



*St. Jacob Russo-Orthodox Church*

This is the oldest church on the tour. It was built in 1901–2 by local craftsman Conrad (Kondrat) Sheremeta. Unlike the previous three churches, St. Jacob's is based on a tripartite (three-part) plan, as opposed to the later and more architecturally sophisticated cruciform plan. However, all the essential elements of the Ukrainian style are still clearly present: the onion domes on octagonal bases, the round-headed windows, and the clear-cut spatial organization of narthex-nave-sanctuary. Note that the belfry situated on top of the narthex is an integral part of the church's structure, whereas for the vast majority of settlement area churches it is a separate building altogether. The crosses on the dome



are different from those on the previous three churches. Those on St. Jacob's have three cross-pieces intersecting the vertical arm, which usually indicates it is an Orthodox church, while the others have a single cross-piece, indicating the Catholic faith.

St. Jacob's was thoroughly renovated in 1942, including the application of stucco to the exterior. The interior is adorned with hung icons, in contrast to those painted directly onto the walls, as are Lipinski's.

The parish has been Russo-Orthodox from its inception. The first priest was Reverend Jacob Korchinsky.





## **St. John the Baptist Russo-Orthodox Church ("Farus' Church")**

**MOLODEIA from St. Jacob's: 1¼ miles north, 6 miles north on Secondary Road (S.R.) 855 (SW 22-55-16-W4)**



*St. John the Baptist Russo-Orthodox Church*

Perched on a rolling hill and partially hidden from roadway view is St. John the Baptist Church or, as the locals call it, "Farus' Church" (so named after the original owner of the land on which the church is situated). The parish was incorporated in 1904 and the church was built three years later by a local German carpenter, Valentine Hennig.

The church's tripartite plan shape points to its early construction date, as does the closed dome and the absence of a choir loft, both of which required sophisticated construction methods that were not yet readily available. The octagonal-based domes and round-headed windows are typical of rural Ukrainian churches. In Russo-Orthodox churches, Mass is celebrated in an ancient language known as Church Slavonic, while in the Ukrainian Catholic and Ukrainian Orthodox churches, Mass is usually conducted in Ukrainian or, less frequently, English.

The church's interior has been thoroughly renovated over the years, including the addition of wood panelling. A cemetery and wooden belltower stand adjacent to the structure.

## St. John Ukrainian Orthodox Church

9

SACHAVA from St. John's at Molodeia:  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile north, 1 mile west on S.R. 637, 4 miles north on S.R. on the west side of the highway (NE 8-56-16-W4)




*St. John Ukrainian Orthodox Church*

This structure, which was built in 1934, has obvious similarities to the first three churches visited, specifically in its plan shape and the twin towers on its facade. An interesting difference is that the towers have round-headed windows on two of their four sides. Like the others, St. John's has a storm porch, though here it is proportionately larger in relation to the rest of the structure. Most churches in the settlement area, even those that were the parish's second, were originally built without such porches. However, it was not long until the extra overclothing demands of the harsh prairie winters necessitated the building of these additions in one form or another. This is a good example of how particular Canadian conditions changed certain aspects of traditional Ukrainian architecture and gave rise to what can genuinely be called a Ukrainian Canadian style.

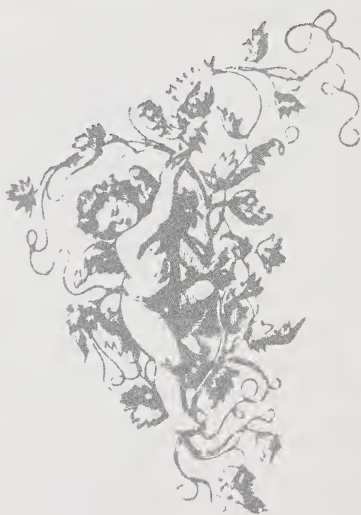
St. John's parish was formed in 1920, very soon after the Ukrainian Orthodox Church had been founded in Canada. The first priest there was Reverend Dmytro Stratyckuk. Services in the Sachava community were originally held in the old St. Michael's church, across the road from the present St. John's site. Soon afterward, a difference of opinion among the





congregation arose when several of the parishioners decided that they wanted to join the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and formed the present St. John's parish. Though no longer the original structure, St. Michael Russo-Orthodox Church still stands across the road from St. John's.

Both churches have adjacent cemeteries.





## Sts. Peter and Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church

10

**KALELAND from St. John's at Sachava:**  
4 miles east of Hairy Hill on Highway  
45, 1¼ miles south (W 16-55-13-W4)

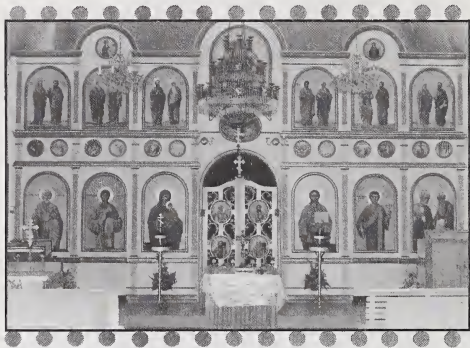


*Sts. Peter and Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church*

This parish is notable for two main reasons: it has the only fieldstone church in the entire settlement area and it is one of the earliest Ukrainian Orthodox parishes in Canada. Established in 1917, Sts. Peter and Paul predates the actual official founding of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in this country. The parish was actually a breakaway congregation from the Russo-Orthodox one at Szypenitz, some three miles to the northeast.

It is not surprising that fieldstone was chosen as the primary construction material at Sts. Peter and Paul. As the second church of the Russo-Orthodox parish at Szypenitz had burnt down shortly after it was built, it was decided that the new building would not be subjected to such risks. John Shandro and Herbert Lefe were the stonemasons, while Nick Hrehirchuk added the the roof and the well-known church builder, Harry Osiecki, constructed the four relatively small domes. The church has a basilican plan shape with a rounded or apsidal wall on the sanctuary end, producing an elongated "D"-shaped structure. This is one of the few buildings on the tour with no storm porch.

Inside, there is a two-tiered iconostasis built in the early 1960s and later painted by Vadym



*View of iconostasis*

Dobrolizh. The remainder of the interior is adorned with hung icons.

Reverend Soroka from New York performed the first liturgical service at the church on 12 July 1917. A cemetery and wooden belltower stand adjacent to the structure.



## St. Mary Ukrainian Orthodox Church

MUSIDORA west end of townsite



*St. Mary Ukrainian Orthodox Church*

In view of the relatively late date of this church -- 1929 -- it is perhaps more simplified in shape and design than might be expected. Both the closed dome and the abbreviated tripartite plan shape with no clear division between narthex and nave (the storm porch is not considered as one of the "parts") were, by 1929, evocative of an earlier era. Further design anomalies are the windows, which are pointed rather than round-headed, and the orientation of the worshipping congregation, which here faces west instead of the usual east. Taken together, these factors suggest a possible lack of expertise, membership, or money in the Ukrainian Orthodox community when this church was built.

The interior of St. Mary's is as interesting for what is not visible as for what is. Early in the structure's history, Vadym Dobrolizh painted both the iconostasis and the interior as a whole. The iconostasis remains in its original condition but the rest of Dobrolizh's work has been painted over or covered up with ceiling tile. Today, simple hung icons adorn the walls throughout. Apparently, this turn of events is connected to the church's having been sold to private, non-religious concerns for a short period. Later, the congregation decided that it wanted to buy the building back and did so, but by that time certain decorative changes



had been made.

The first parish priest was Reverend Ivan Maiba. There is a wooden belltower next to the church while the Ivan Kotliarevsky Hall (made of fieldstone) sits behind it.





## St. John the Baptist Ukrainian Orthodox Church

MORECAMBE approximately 3 miles east of Musidora on Highway 45, 1 mile north (NE 23-54-11-W4)



*St. John the Baptist Ukrainian Orthodox Church*

This is the only structure on the tour that was not originally built to be a church. It actually began as a school but was purchased by the parish in 1963 and remodelled. With the exception of the Orthodox cross on the front of the storm porch, there is no outward evidence of this being a Ukrainian house of worship. It has pointed windows and no domes, which suggests the presence of non-Ukrainian architectural influences when the remodelling took place.

Traditionally, one would enter a Ukrainian church at its west end and face east during the service. This was based on the belief that the faithful had chosen to leave the darkness of evil in the West and enter the road to Christ, who is called the "Light from the East" in the Holy Scriptures. St. John's, however, is one of several examples on the tour in which the worshipping congregation faces west, indicating that this tradition was not always followed.

St. John the Baptist Parish was founded early in the century and was Russo-Orthodox at the outset. This building replaced the original 1913 church, which had been destroyed by fire.

There is a cemetery in the churchyard.

## St. Mary Ukrainian Orthodox Church

13

**SZYPENITZ** from St. John's at Morecambe: 1 mile south, 7½ miles west on Highway 45, 4 miles north on Highway 36, 6½ miles west on S.R. 637 (SW 27-55-13-W4)



*St. Mary Ukrainian Orthodox Church*

St. Mary's is one of the few brick churches built in the settlement area. As noted under the description of Sts. Peter and Paul Church at Kaleland, the choice of this durable building material is not surprising, as the second church at Szypenitz burned down shortly after it was built. Harry Osiecki built the tripartite structure in 1917, basing it on the design he had used when he built the parish's second church in 1911. It is said that this particular design closely resembled that of the church in Osiecki's village in Ukraine. The relationship of the large central dome to the rest and the presence of the ubiquitous round-headed windows is particularly noteworthy.

The church's interior was painted by Peter Lipinski. It is one of the few Orthodox churches with which he can be credited and it contains all of his characteristic trademarks: walls painted to resemble cut stone, the ornamental borderwork, and the angels on the dome's ceiling. In addition, St. Mary's has a beautiful two-tiered iconostasis painted by Lipinski.

The parish was Russo-Orthodox at the outset. Then, in 1916-17, a disagreement developed within the community and several of the parishoners left to form the Ukrainian Orthodox parish at Kaleland. In 1941, St.



Mary's, too, entered the Ukrainian Orthodox fold.

While the other buildings associated with the rural community of Szypenitz have either been abandoned like the hall or dismantled like the school, the church continues to be used. The historical integrity of the church, the belltower, and the neighbouring cemetery reflects the congregation's care in maintaining the site over the years.

St. Mary Ukrainian Orthodox Church was designated a Provincial Historic Resource in 1987.







## Holy Ascension Russo-Orthodox Church

WASEL from St. Mary's at Szypenitz: 2 miles west to Highway 45; approximately 10 miles west on Highway 45 to S.R. 857, north on S.R. 857 for approximately 10 miles (NW 1-58-14-W4)



*Holy Ascension Russo-Orthodox Church*

Holy Ascension Russo-Orthodox Church is located in the area settled by the well-known Hawrelak family (William Hawrelak was a controversial but popular mayor of Edmonton in the 1960s and 1970s). Its design is common to a number of Russo-Orthodox churches (some of which later converted to Ukrainian Orthodoxy) found in the settlement area. Several elements of its design, such as the tripartite plan shape with a relatively larger central unit and the small closed central dome on a large octagonal drum, are peculiar to areas settled by Bukovynians like the Hawrelaks.

Although the precise date of construction is not known, it can be estimated that the church was built sometime between 1909 and 1913. Churches of this architectural type were invariably the first to be built in a given parish and thus clearly represent the direct influence of similar structures in Ukraine. Subsequent churches were, in general, much more "Ukrainian Canadian" than "Ukrainian" in style and design.

A belltower and cemetery are also located in the churchyard.



## St. Paroskovia Ukrainian Orthodox Church

15

**DOWNING** from Holy Ascension at Wasel: 1½ miles north, 1 mile east, 2 miles north, 4 miles east, ¼ mile south (NW 23-58-14-W4)



*St. Paroskovia Ukrainian Orthodox Church*

Built in the mid-1920s, this modest church is a stylization of earlier churches, such as the one at Wasel (though without the large central drum), built by many Bukovynian settlers. Like its architectural predecessors, it is a tripartite structure with a relatively larger central unit. There is a small open central dome and two small cupolas located over the narthex and sanctuary. The worshipping congregation faces east, as is usual, but this church is one of a very few on the tour with neither round-headed windows nor an enclosed storm porch.

The first church service at St. Paroskovia's was held in 1924. There is a large wooden belltower and a cemetery adjacent to the church.



## **Sts. Peter and Paul Russo-Orthodox Church** <sup>16</sup>

**DICKIEBUSH** from St. Paroskovia's at Downing:  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile north, 6 miles west,  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile north on gravel road (NE 27-58-15-W4)



*Sts. Peter and Paul Russo-Orthodox Church*

In a place settlers called "wild bush" stands one of the most impressive structures in the settlement area. Perched high on a hill and visible for miles around, this proud tribute to Ukrainian culture and the pioneering spirit invites all to share in its splendour.

Built in the years 1909-14, Sts. Peter and Paul is one of the most impressive churches in the area for several reasons. Constructed from logs (siding was first applied in 1915), it is one of the region's first cruciform churches and one of the first with a completely open dome (as opposed to a closed dome on an open drum). As well, the dome was not a cautious, small-scale experiment: the ceiling extends a full 20 metres above floor level. The builder was a carpenter named Steve Rosychuk, a man who could neither read nor write but who was able to make plans for Sts. Peter and Paul from the mental image of a church he had seen in his homeland.

Though Ukrainian in terms of plan shape and essential design elements, the church has several features that are distinctive. The belfry, for instance, is positioned on top of the narthex and forms an integral part of the structure. In addition, the arms of the cross in the cruciform shape (i.e., the north and south wings) are



apsidal rather than rectangular in shape, thus emphasizing the building's height. Symbolically, the taller the building stood, the closer it was to the heavens.

An opportunity to see the interior of this religious and architectural treasure should not be missed. Reverend N. Leoko, parish priest in 1924, painted Sts. Peter and Paul both inside and out and the congregation has maintained the church's historical integrity to an exceptional degree ever since. Conforming to the ancient tradition in Eastern-rite churches, there are no pews, only a small number of benches along the walls for the very young and the elderly. The beauty of the two-tiered iconostasis and the sheer magnificence of the structure's interior space are simply breathtaking.

A cemetery and community hall are situated in the yard near the church.



## St. Pokrova Ukrainian Orthodox Church

17

**EDWAND from Sts. Peter and Paul at Dickiebush:**  
**5¼ miles north on S.R. 857, 7 miles west on**  
**Highway 28, 1 mile north (SW 26-59-16-W4)**



*St. Pokrova Ukrainian Orthodox Church*

St. Pokrova's is the second-oldest church on the tour. The parish was founded in 1903 and construction on the building began shortly thereafter. This is another of the structures on the tour that can be characterized as Bukovynian, with its steeply-sloped hipped roof and its small domes. Tripartite in plan shape, St. Pokrova's was built by contractor Teodor Billey from Wostok.

Because of the care taken in the church's preservation and maintenance over the years, a tour of the inside provides visitors with the same sense of history that is afforded in Sts. Peter and Paul Church at Dickiebush. One interesting feature of the interior is the wall between sanctuary and nave that serves as the iconostasis; in most churches, the iconostasis is a partition instead of a full wall. This duplicates construction techniques used in Ukraine, wherein the parts of a tripartite structure were built side by side, joined together, and then had holes cut in the walls to allow movement between them. The walls of St. Pokrova's, including the iconostasis, are adorned with hung icons. The church has agreed to modernization by allowing chairs in the nave.



The parish was Russo-Orthodox throughout most of its history and has only recently converted to Ukrainian Orthodoxy. This occurred when the attending Russo-Orthodox priest died at the age of 42, leaving conversion to another denomination as the only way for the parish to maintain services. Except for the placing of a commemorative plaque on the north interior elevation, the physical structure of the church has not been altered as a result of accepting the new ministry.

In addition to the church, the large yard also contains a cemetery, a wooden belltower, and a parish hall.



## Holy Trinity Russo-Orthodox Church <sup>18</sup>

SMOKY LAKE from St. Pokrova's at Edward: 1 mile south, 7 miles west; immediately north of the town of Smoky Lake (SE 28-59-17-W4)



*The first Holy Trinity Russo-Orthodox Church, 1904–28 (Photo courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta)*

Constructed in 1928, Holy Trinity is one of a handful of cruciform churches built by Harry Holowaychuk in the 1920s and 1930s. The structure is typical of that period, with its open central dome, round-headed windows, and storm porch. This particular building also has sacristies attached to the east corners of the north and south exterior elevations and smaller, closed domes over the narthex and sanctuary.

The present church is actually the parish's second. The parish was established in 1904, with the first church built shortly thereafter. Structurally, it was similar to the Holy Ascension Church at Wasel: it had a tripartite plan shape and a small closed dome situated on a large central drum. In 1928, the original Holy Trinity Church burned down and the present one was built on the site. A progression from simple to more complex and sophisticated design features can be seen in the construction of the successive church buildings.



*The second Holy Trinity Church, 1928 (Photo courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta)*

Holy Trinity Church stands adjacent to the largest Ukrainian cemetery in the settlement area. In front of the building is a combination parish hall and belltower. Built in 1904, the belltower is original (see photograph) while the hall was added sometime later.







## St. Paraskevia Ukrainian Catholic Church

COSSACK from Holy Trinity at Smoky Lake: 8 miles north on S.R. 855, 1 mile west (SW 4-61-17-W4)



*Congregation of St. Paraskevia Ukrainian Catholic Church at Cossack, 1936 (Photo courtesy of Provincial Archives of Alberta)*

St. Paraskevia's is the most northerly Ukrainian church in the settlement area. Built in 1930 by carpenter Harry Stocky, it is another of several instances in which early-period design features were used in a relatively modern structure. It has a tripartite plan shape and its roof has obvious similarities to the style evident in the original Holy Trinity Church at Smoky Lake and the Holy Ascension Church at Wasel.

This structure is the parish's second church. The first was a log chapel built by local craftsman Adam Holowaychuk in 1913, a year after the parish had been founded. It was then rebuilt in 1930 and the original log chapel removed. Reverend Phillip Ruh, who had arrived in the area only recently, was the first parish priest.

The interior of St. Paraskevia's is highlighted by an iconostasis that was added after the church was built. While the church's walls were painted by the craftsman Mr. Matiash soon after the building was completed, the iconostasis was not painted until sometime in the early 1960s.

An old wooden belltower is situated to the northwest of the church, while the cemetery is beside it, to the north.



## St. Onufry Ukrainian Catholic Church

20

**BARICH** from St. Paraskevia's at Cossack: 2 miles south, 1 mile west (SE 6-60-17-W4)



*St. Onufry Ukrainian Catholic Church*

Situated high on a hill, St. Onufry Ukrainian Catholic Church has not been used for almost a quarter of a century. However, it is not abandoned. Although its former parishoners attend Mass in the town of Smoky Lake, they still occasionally gather at St. Onufry's to clean and maintain it.

This church is one of the earliest designs of the priest-architect, Reverend Phillip Ruh. Except for the ever-present dome, the church's exterior features suggest much more of a classical influence than most Ukrainian churches in the region exhibit. The shaped window heads, for instance, and the height of the building relative to its area are characteristic of the Classical style. The pediment-shaped lintels and the tall dimensions of the building relative to its width and length are reminiscent of a small classical temple. In addition, it has return eaves and a shaped lintel over the entry door which, although not strictly classical features, are rarely found on Ukrainian churches.

St. Onufry's has an abbreviated tripartite plan shape and a blind dome. It was built through the joint efforts of the parishioners and eventually painted in 1928. The parish incorporated itself and built a small chapel on



site in 1907. Although the present church was built in 1915, it is possible that the structure incorporates the original 1907 chapel.

Inside, there is an elaborately-decorated single-tiered iconostasis. The walls are adorned with both hung icons and images which have been painted directly onto the clapboard wall surface.

A belltower and cemetery are situated on the site.



## St. Michael the Archangel Russo-Orthodox Church

PENO from St. Onufry's at Barich:  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile west,  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile south, 3 miles east, 19 miles south on S.R. 855 (SW 18-57-18-W4)



*St. Michael the Archangel Russo-Orthodox Church*

Nestled in the trees next to an abandoned hall, St. Michael's catches the visitor unawares. Like its contemporary, Sts. Peter and Paul at Dickiebush, it is constructed from logs. It is also one of the earliest examples of an open-dome cruciform church in the settlement area. It was built just after the parish was founded in 1909 (the same year Sts. Peter and Paul was begun) by volunteer labour under the direction of a local carpenter, Mr. Korpan. The cross-gable roof has a single large central dome on an octagonal base.

Inside, there is a delicately-crafted three-tiered iconostasis. The walls and ceilings were painted by Peter Lipinski in 1918 (one of his earlier efforts). Characteristic of Lipinski's work, the dome was originally painted sky



blue, resplendent with floating winged angels and brilliant stars. The dome and stars have since been repainted but the angels have not been altered. The image of St. David painted on the choir loft was a fitting and recurring theme in Lipinski's iconographic scheme, as David was known as a talented lyre player whose music soothed King Saul's temper. Note that the gold frames around Lipinski's images are also painted to imitate plaster moulded frames.

In front of the church stands a belltower built from split fieldstone, the material from which the church's foundation is also constructed.



## Russo-Orthodox Church of the Transfiguration

STAR-EDNA from St. Michael's at Peno: 4¼ miles south, 2 miles west (SE 27-56-19-W4)



*Russo-Orthodox Church of the Transfiguration, 1942 (Photo courtesy of Provincial Archives of Alberta)*

The Church of the Transfiguration was built in 1913. It is an early cruciform church with a large central dome on an octagonal base, round-headed windows, and other features common to Ukrainian Canadian churches.

Historically, the Transfiguration Church and parish are particularly significant. Not only was this the first Ukrainian parish in Canada (having been founded by, among others, Ivan Pylypow, one of the two original Ukrainian settlers in Canada), but the present church is also located immediately north of the section of land that welcomed the first Ukrainian homesteads. Established in 1897 by Reverend Nestor Dmytriv, this parish was originally Ukrainian Catholic. Early in the century's first years, however, part of the congregation decided to convert to the Russo-Orthodox faith. Since there was no precedent as to which group should retain trusteeship of the existing church property (a church had been built in 1898), the case went to court and was eventually settled by Canada's highest legal authority at the time, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London, England. The Privy Council ruled in favour of

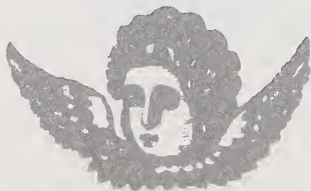


*Interior view*

the splinter Russo-Orthodox congregation, stating that those who wished to remain Ukrainian Catholic should receive a proportionate amount of compensation based on the current value of the parish property.

The Church of the Transfiguration has been extremely well-maintained over the years. The interior contains an ornate, three-tiered iconostasis. The pews are a relatively recent addition.

The pioneer Ivan Pylypow is buried in the adjacent cemetery. The wooden belltower and parish hall are located several hundred metres to the west of the church.



**Ukrainian Catholic Church of the  
Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary**  
STAR-PENO from the Church of the  
Transfiguration at Star-Edna: 1 mile west, 1 mile  
north (NE 28-56-19-W4)



*Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Ukrainian  
Catholic Church*

This church is the result of the Privy Council's decision to award trusteeship of the first Ukrainian Canadian parish to the splinter Russo-Orthodox congregation at Star-Edna. After the court's decision, the Ukrainian Catholics took the resources they were awarded as compensation and built their own new church in 1911. It burned down eleven years later, after which the present church was built by L. Chekhnita in 1926.

Structurally, this church is very similar to its counterpart at Star-Edna. However, its narthex was elongated in later years in lieu of a separate enclosed storm porch, an alteration that is evident in the slightly different stucco pattern on the exterior of the addition.

The interior of the church was painted by Peter Lipinski in 1930. Note Lipinski's skilfully-painted wall motifs, including the imitation stonework, "marbellized" columns, and the embroidery-inspired motif which runs along the upper portions of the walls. On the south interior elevation hangs a cross and several icons, the only artifacts saved when the parish's second church burned down in 1922.

Outside, there is a cemetery, a commemorative plaque, a parish hall, and a beautifully-crafted split fieldstone belltower.



## Holy Cross Ukrainian Catholic Church

24

**SKARO from Assumption of Blessed Virgin Church at Star-Peno: 1 mile north, 3 miles west on Highway 45, ½ mile north (SE 1-57-20-W4)**



*Holy Cross Ukrainian Catholic Church*

The rural community of Skaro is known for its three magnificent churches. Of these, Holy Cross Ukrainian Catholic Church is by far the largest. Its size and design are representative of Ukrainian Canadian church architecture based on the Ukrainian Baroque style. Indeed, many Ukrainian churches built since the time of construction of Holy Cross (1945) are fundamentally variations of the Ukrainian Baroque Style.

Holy Cross is a cruciform structure with four relatively smaller square rooms added to the angles between the arms of the cross so that the plan consists of nine distinct parts. The result is a rectangular building which has, in this case, domed towers on each of the four corners. Consistent with most churches of this type, many of the elements of the Ukrainian Canadian church style are present in Holy Cross: the round-headed windows, (note the trinity windows on three of the four elevations), the large central dome on an octagonal base, and the covered porch.

The church was built by a contractor named E. Beres, who obtained the blueprints for it elsewhere. The parish was organized in 1900, making it one of the earlier parishes in the



settlement area. The present church is the second one on the site, the first having been constructed in 1911 by the well-known builder and Basilian lay brother, Jarema Janishewski. That church burned down in 1942, making way for the new one three years later. The parish retained the original belltower, which stands immediately to the northwest of the present church.



## Holy Ascension Russo-Orthodox Church

25

**SKARO from Holy Cross at Skaro: ¼ mile north  
(NE 1-57-20-W4)**



### *Holy Ascension Russo-Orthodox Church*

After the architectural sophistication of Holy Cross Church, this church returns to the stark, simple beauty of an earlier generation. Although it was built by John Lopushinsky as late as 1920, Holy Ascension Church is a tripartite structure with a central unit that is slightly larger than the other two. It has a large open central dome and two very small cupolas over the nave and sanctuary. This is the second church in the parish, the first one having been a log structure built at the turn of the century.

The parish was founded in 1897–98, making it one of the first Russo-Orthodox parishes in Canada. It was originally named in honour of St. Mary the Protectress but this was changed to Holy Ascension when the new church was built. Reverend Jacob Korchinsky was the first parish priest.

Inside, the church has been preserved and maintained to an exceptionally high degree. There is a sublime four-tiered iconostasis and a framed icon to its right that was painted by Peter Lipinski in 1947. It is common to find individual examples of Lipinski's work such as this throughout the province's Ukrainian churches. After Lipinski retired, he painted canvases in his own home and sold them to the church goods supply store in Winnipeg, from which most of these churches bought their



materials. Lipinski thus also left his legacy in many of the churches he did not paint.

Like most of the others, Holy Ascension Church has an adjacent cemetery and a belltower, here built of fieldstone.



## St. Demetrius the Martyr Ukrainian Orthodox Church

26

JAROSLAW from Holy Ascension at Skaro:

1 mile west of the junction of Highways 38/45; it stands on the south side of the highway (NE 33-56-20-W4)



*St. Demetrius Ukrainian Orthodox Church*

The final church on the tour is an interesting cruciform structure, the history of which reveals much about trends in Ukrainian religion and architecture throughout the rest of the settlement area. Like many churches on the tour, St. Demetrius is the second church on its site. It was built from 1939 to 1941 by contractor George Daskoch to replace a log church that had been constructed in 1904. Daskoch made lumber for the new church from some of the logs used in the original one.

The parish was originally Ukrainian Catholic and was served by the Basilian fathers from Mundare until 1923. Religious differences developed in the Jaroslaw community and in 1925 the parish was reorganized as the Ukrainian Orthodox Parish of St. Demetrius the Martyr. As a result, a new Ukrainian Catholic parish was established at Jaroslaw, which eventually built the Holy Spirit Church that stands across the road to the northeast of St. Demetrius'.

Inside, St. Demetrius' intimate beauty emanates from its stark simplicity. The walls are adorned with hung icons while the two-tiered iconostasis was painted by Vadym Dobrolizh in 1959. Ukrainian embroidery work



also accentuates many of the church artifacts.

The first Ukrainian Orthodox priest to serve the parish was Reverend Dmytro Seneta.

North of the church, there is a cemetery that serves both the Ukrainian Orthodox and the Ukrainian Catholic communities at Jaroslaw.





## GLOSSARY

- APSE:** A shallow wing or bay which is semi-circular in plan and usually roofed with a half-dome. In a church, the sanctuary is often located in an apse.
- BASILICAN PLAN:** A rectangular plan usually with an aisle along each of the long sides of the building and an apse at one end.
- CHAPLET:** A small chapel or prayer station.
- CROSS-GABLE:** Two intersecting gable roofs, the ridges of which form a cross.
- CRUCIFORM PLAN:** A cross-shaped building; in Ukrainian churches, a five-part design.
- CUPOLA:** A small dome.
- DOME:** A hemispherical roof; in Ukrainian churches, the shape is varied to the characteristic Baroque "onion" shape. Symbolizes the heavens.
- FACADE:** The main front of a building.
- GABLE ROOF:** A roof with two sloping surfaces and an inverted v-shaped cross-section.
- HIPPED ROOF:** A roof having a sloping surface instead of a vertical gable end. Often resembles a pyramid in shape.
- ICONOSTASIS:** Icon wall separating nave from sanctuary in many Eastern-rite churches; symbolizes the division between God and man (Ukrainian: *ikonostas*).
- LINTEL:** A horizontal beam or stone over a doorway or window.
- NARTHEX:** The antechamber to the nave where those not permitted to take part in the service may stand. In Ukrainian churches, it is usually located on the west end and is called a *prytvor* or *babynets*.
- NAVE:** The main part of a church where the congregation gathers to take part in the service. The large area between the narthex and the sanctuary (Ukrainian: *khram virnykh* or *nava*).
- NINE-PART PLAN:** The most complex Ukrainian church plan. An extension of the cruciform plan in which four additional areas -- one in





each angle of the cross -- are included in the design.

**PARAPET:** A low wall projecting along the edge of a roof, which may be embellished or decorated.

**SACRISTY:** A room or rooms in a church in which ecclesiastical vestments and other related materials are kept; almost always attached to one or both sides of the sanctuary.

**SANCTUARY:** The area in a church in which the altar is located and the priest conducts the Mass; usually located at the east end of a Ukrainian church and occasionally separated from the nave by an iconostasis (Ukrainian: *sviatylyshche* or *vivtar*).

**TRINITY WINDOW:** A three-part window in which the central section is taller than those flanking it. The three windows symbolize the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

**TRIPARTITE PLAN:** A plan made up of three parts or units corresponding to the narthex, nave, and sanctuary. Abbreviated tripartite: same as the tripartite plan but without the narthex.



## CREDITS

Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism would like to acknowledge the contribution made by Jerry Iwanus as well as the following individuals and organizations:

Radomir Bilash  
Dr. Bohdan Kordan  
Festival '88  
Provincial Archives of Alberta

Additional copies of the tour may be obtained from:  
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University of Alberta  
EDMONTON, Alberta  
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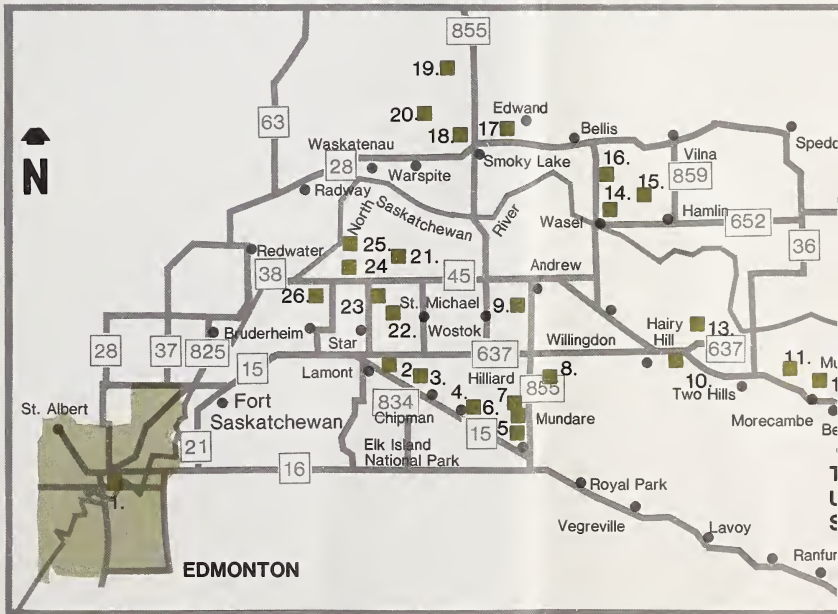
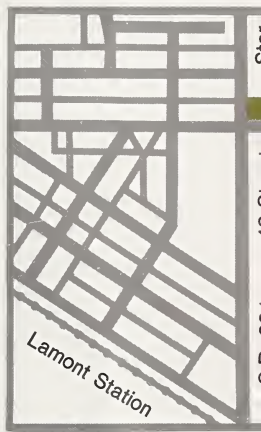
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# **Historical Driving Tour: Ukrainian Churches in East Central Alberta**

1. Edmonton (108A Avenue and 97 Street)  
St. Josaphat Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral 1939-44
2. Lamont (50 Avenue and 48 Street)  
St. John the Baptist Ukrainian Catholic Church 1947
3. Chipman (50 Street, south of 48 Avenue)  
St. Mary Ukrainian Catholic Church 1916
4. Hilliard (townsite)  
Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Ukrainian Catholic Church 1938
5. Mundare (Sawchuk Street, north at 50 Street)  
Basilian Monastery 1922
6. Mundare (Sawchuk Street, north of 50 Street)  
Grotto "Golgotha of Mundare" 1932
7. Beaver Lake (SE 1-54-17-W4)  
St. Jacob Russo-Orthodox Church 1901
8. Molodeia (SW 22-55-16-W4)  
St. John the Baptist Russo-Orthodox Church 1907
9. Sachava (NE 8-56-16-W4)  
St. John Ukrainian Orthodox Church 1934
10. Kaleland (W 16-55-13-W4)  
Sis. Peter and Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church 1917
1. Musidora (townsite)  
St. Mary Ukrainian Orthodox Church 1929
2. Morecambe (NE 23-54-11-W4)  
St. John the Baptist Ukrainian Orthodox Church ca. 1930
3. Szypenitz (SW 27-55-13-W4)  
St. Mary Ukrainian Orthodox Church 1917
4. Wasel (NW 1-58-14-W4)  
Holy Ascension Russo-Orthodox Church ca. 1910
5. Downing (NW 23-58-14-W4)  
St. Paroskovia Ukrainian Orthodox Church ca. 1924
6. Dickiebush (NE 27-58-15-W4)  
Sts. Peter and Paul Russo-Orthodox Church 1909-14
7. Edwand (SW 26-59-16-W4)  
St. Pokrova Russo-Orthodox Church 1903
8. Smoky Lake (SE 28-59-17-W4)  
Holy Trinity Russo-Orthodox Church 1928
9. Cossack (SW 4-61-17-W4)  
St. Paraskevia Ukrainian Catholic Church 1930

20. Barich (SE 6-60-17-W4)  
St. Onufry Ukrainian Catholic Church 1915
21. Peno (SW 18-57-18-W4)  
St. Michael the Archangel Russo-Orthodox Church 1909

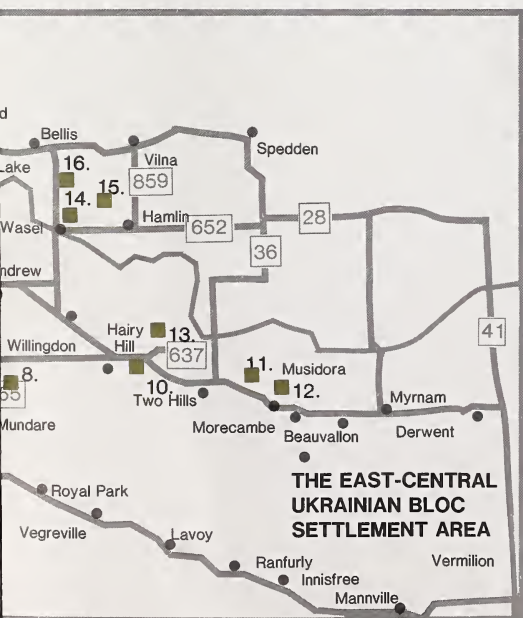
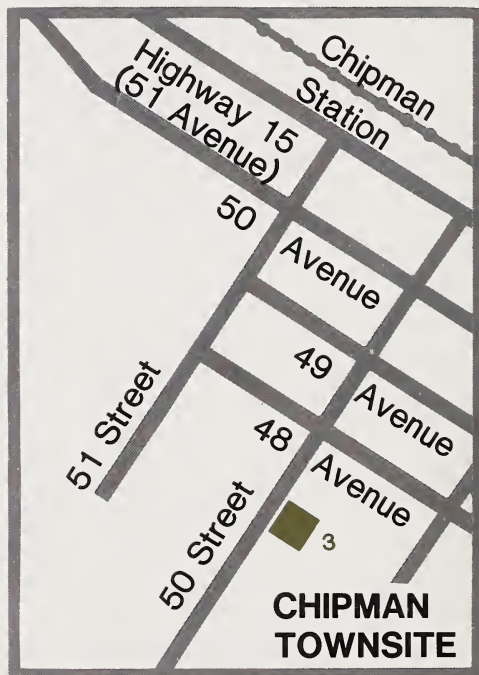
22. Star-Edna (SE 27-56-17-W4)  
Russo-Orthodox Church of the Transfiguration
23. Star-Peno (NE 28-56-17-W4)  
Assumption of Blessed Virgin Mary Ukrainian Catholic Church



22. Star-Edna (SE 27-56-19-W4)  
Russo-Orthodox Church of the  
Transfiguration 1913
23. Star-Peno (NE 28-56-19-W4)  
Assumption of Blessed Virgin Mary  
Ukrainian Catholic Church 1926



24. Skaro (SE 1-57-20-W4)  
Holy Cross Ukrainian Catholic Church 1945
25. Skaro (NE 1-57-20-W4)  
Holy Ascension Russo-Orthodox Church 1920
26. Jaroslaw (NW 33-56-20-W4)  
St. Demetrius the Martyr Ukrainian Orthodox  
Church 1939













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